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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0356
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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0815
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0172
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0863
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0085
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 0134
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0056
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 0070
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0095
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 0408
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE//
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000609

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (NICOLAIDES)

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TAGS: [IR](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN'S BERDIMUHAMMEDOV,S STATE VISIT TO
IRAN: TEHRAN CALLING THE SHOTS

REF: A. A) 06 ASHGABAT 0804

[1](#)B. B) ASHGABAT 0600

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Jennifer L. Brush for reasons 1.
4 (B) and (D).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Turkmenistan's President Berdimuhammedov's June 15-16 visit to Tehran demonstrated that Iran continues to call the shots in its relationship with Turkmenistan. The joint communique, calling Iran's foreign policy "a stabilizing and peaceful force in the world," was more a reflection of Persian self-indulgence than a credible bilateral document. Turkmenistan's Foreign Affairs Deputy Chairman Rashit Meredov refused to be drawn out by the Charge about the visit, stressing only Turkmenistan's wish for "good-neighborly relations." Local observers characterize the visit as obligatory -- Berdimuhammedov visits his neighbors first -- and downplay any idea that overall relations with Iran will change. Turkmenistan's policy vis-a-vis its prickly neighbor to the south is likely to remain predominantly commercial, with no overt criticism of Iran or its policies. End Summary.

Berdimuhammedov's State Visit to Iran

[1](#)2. (U) Berdimuhammedov headed a large governmental delegation to Tehran June 15-16 in response to Iranian President Ahmadinejad's March 16 invitation. During the two days, Berdimuhammedov and his host met one-on-one several times and held a joint press conference. Turkmenistan's president reportedly secured Ahmadinejad's commitment to visit Ashgabat and Iran's support for extending construction of a North-South corridor transport railway between

Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan into Iran. Once completed, the railway would offer rail transport to Gulf ports for Russia and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Berdimuhammedov signed an agreement with Iran Khudro car plant for the purchase of buses and specially equipped traffic police cars and visited Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Joint Communiqué Only Significant Document

¶3. (U) The only significant document the two signed was a joint communiqué which stated:

-- The common border between Turkmenistan and Iran was a border of peace, friendship and brotherhood, and that border issues needed to be resolved peacefully;

-- The importance both of continuing exports of gas, electricity, oil and hydrocarbon products to Iran and of having bilateral negotiations in this field;

-- That Iran welcomed Turkmenistan's suggestion for construction of a railroad line from Turkmenbashi (on the Caspian coast) to Gorgan;

-- The usefulness of resuming air transportation routes;

-- The need for peaceful resolution of regional problems, given the need to increase efforts to guarantee peace and stability in the region; and

-- On Caspian issues, the need for peaceful and diplomatic resolution of problems by all five littoral countries and to speed up the Second Caspian Summit and put in place the Caspian Legal Status Convention.

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¶4. (U) The communiqué also included three elements that had been repeated from the joint communiqué signed in August 2006 during Ahmadinejad's visit to Ashgabat:

-- Agreement that neither side would allow its territory to be used in attacks against the other;

-- A statement of Turkmenistan's support for Iran's "active and positive role" in promoting regional and international peace, stability and tranquility; and

-- Iran's support for Turkmenistan's neutral status.

Meredov Refuses to Discuss Visit

¶5. (C) Unlike the briefings he voluntarily offered the Charge following Berdimuhammedov's two meetings with Russian President Putin, Meredith was uncharacteristically silent about the president's visit to Tehran when the Charge met with him on another matter on June 18. Stressing only his country's wish for "good-neighborly relations" with Iran, Meredith refused to comment further about the visit. Diplomats accredited to Ashgabat uniformly agreed that Berdimuhammedov had little choice about the meeting: the president is visiting his neighbors first, and Iran is one of Turkmenistan's top trading partners. Most also concurred that the proposed exchange of visits would not lead to a change in Turkmenistan's fundamentally cautious and primarily commercial relationship with its difficult neighbor.

Comment

¶6. (C) Relations between Iran and Turkmenistan have not improved significantly since last year: the border remains heavily guarded and travel restrictions on Iranians are tight. Although the authorities here express concern to VIP

U.S. visitors about Iran's deteriorating relations with the IAEA and the rest of the international community, Berdimuhammedov clearly is not ready to offer overt criticism of Iran or its policies. End Comment.
BRUSH